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KA HOPE LUNA HO'OKELE

STATE OF HAWAII
KA MOKU'ĀINA O HAWAI'I
DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN SERVICES
KA 'OIHANA MĀLAMA LAWELawe KANAKA
Office of the Director
P. O. Box 339
Honolulu, Hawaii 96809-0339

TRISTA SPEER
DEPUTY DIRECTOR
KA HOPE LUNA HO'OKELE

February 9, 2025

TO: The Honorable Senator Joy A. San Buenaventura, Chair
Senate Committee on Health and Human Services

FROM: Ryan I. Yamane, Director

SUBJECT: **SB 950 – RELATING TO TRAUMA-INFORMED CARE.**

Hearing: February 10, 2025, 1:20 p.m.
Conference Room 225 & Videoconference, State Capitol

DEPARTMENT'S POSITION: The Department of Human Services (DHS) supports this measure, which is very similar to the administration measure SB1398 from the Office of Wellness and Resilience (OWR) that came before this committee on February 5, 2025, and passed with amendments. DHS provides comments.

PURPOSE: Requires the Office of Wellness and Resilience to design, implement, and administer trauma-informed organizational assessments and a training curriculum for Child Welfare Services to support the development of a trauma-informed child welfare system in the State. Allows the office to contract with public and private entities to provide necessary services. Appropriates funds.

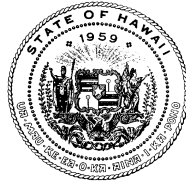
DHS appreciates the additional support and resources from OWR to assess the Child Welfare Services Branch's (CWSB) organizational and staff needs aimed at fully adopting a trauma-informed approach to providing vital and essential services to children and families involved in the child welfare system. The bill promotes a collaborative approach to examine

and transform CWSB's practices and policies that will address recommendations of the Malama Ohana Working Group.

DHS appreciates that the proposal enhances CWSB's existing trauma-informed assessments, training, and policies to further address worker well-being and the vicarious trauma that DHS staff experience. The strategy may lead to reduced burnout and support staff recruitment and retention efforts. While DHS CWSB has a long history of developing innovative practices and inclusion of diverse insights from individuals and families with lived experience, cultural experts, communities, providers, and public and private partners, this OWR-led effort may lead to the improved application of trauma-informed training to daily practice.

DHS shares the goals of organizational trauma assessments: to increase awareness of the impact of trauma on individuals and how to respond effectively, improve service delivery that reduces retraumatization, support staff development and competencies when working with children and families who have experienced multiple Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACE), enhance positive organizational structure where clients and staff feel safe to communicate their experience and needs and gain insights to assist with additional program development and quality improvement. Taken together, the effort should result in a stronger organization and better outcomes for children and families served by DHS Child Welfare Services.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony in support of this bill.



STATE OF HAWAII
OFFICE OF WELLNESS AND RESILIENCE
KE KE'ENA KŪPA'A MAULI OLA
OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR
415 S.BERETANIA ST. #415
HONOLULU, HAWAII 96813

**Testimony in SUPPORT of S.B. 950
RELATING TO TRAUMA INFORMED CARE**

Senator San Buenaventura, Chair
Senator Aquino, Vice Chair
Senate Committee on Health and Human Services

February 10, 2025, at 1:20 p.m. Room Number: 225

The Office of Wellness and Resilience (OWR) in the Governor's Office **STRONGLY SUPPORTS** S.B. 950, Relating to Trauma Informed Care.

The OWR strongly supports S.B. 950, which establishes trauma-informed organizational assessments and training curricula for the child welfare services branch within the Department of Human Services (DHS). This bill is an essential tool for improving the child welfare system's ability to effectively support both families impacted by trauma and the dedicated professionals who serve them.

The Mālama 'Ohana Working Group (MOWG) Report documents the voices of lived experiences of children and families who have navigated our state's child welfare system. In the Report, "Families involved with the Child Welfare Service Branch (CWS) find it challenging to navigate the complicated system and related services. The experience often feels adversarial, confusing, secretive, and isolating for both children and parents, causing further trauma". To address this, the MOWG puts forward the recommendation of developing a trauma-informed system that "when CWS intervenes in a family, ensure that the intervention is respectful and supportive, minimizes trauma, and does not create more harm than the original issue they hoped to address".

Under Act 291, the OWR is responsible for addressing systemic challenges affecting the well-being of all individuals in Hawai'i, which includes supporting agencies like CWS in integrating trauma-informed care practices. S.B. 950 directly aligns with the mission of the OWR by addressing the critical barriers to well-being for both staff and the children and families served by CWS.

By using evidence-based tools to assess and improve policies and practices within CWS, S.B. 950 will help CWS make steps towards being trauma-informed. Trauma-informed care is essential for meeting the safety, permanency, and well-being needs of children in the child welfare system. It ensures that children are receiving the trauma-informed screenings,

assessments, and evidence-based treatments they need, leading to better outcomes for children in the child welfare system.

In addition, a critical aspect of S.B. 950 is its focus on the well-being of child welfare workers themselves. The bill proposes assessments that will identify and help mitigate vicarious trauma, secondary traumatic stress, and burnout—issues that are unfortunately common in this challenging field. Additionally, S.B. 950 calls for the development of a trauma-informed training curriculum for staff, which will include trauma-informed supervision training. This approach will help to create a supportive, resilient workforce, ensuring that trauma-informed care becomes deeply embedded in the culture of CWS. Further, by strengthening the support for those working within the system, it will then ensure better care and outcomes for the children and families they serve.

Lastly, the provisions for expert consultation to guide the implementation of these assessments, ensure that reforms are based on best practices and tailored to the unique needs of Hawai'i.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on this important bill.

Tia L.R. Hartsock, MSW, MSCJA
Director, Office of Wellness & Resilience
Office of the Governor



HAWAI'I YOUTH SERVICES NETWORK

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Greg Tjapkes, Secretary

Judith F. Clark, Executive
Director

Network Membership

Access to Independence
Big Brothers Big Sisters Hawai'i
Bobby Benson Center
Child and Family Service
Coalition for a Drug-Free Hawai'i
Domestic Violence Action Center
EPIC 'Ohana, Inc.
Friends of the Children's Justice
Center of Maui
Get Ready Hawai'i
Hale Kipa, Inc.
Hale 'Opio Kaua'i, Inc.
Hawai'i Children's Action
Network
Hawai'i Health & Harm
Reduction Center
Hawaii Island Community'
Health Center
Ho'ola Na Pua
Ho'okele Coalition of Kaua'i
Ka Hale Pomaika'i
Kokua Kalihi Valley
Kaua'i Planning and Action
Alliance
Lines for Life Youth Line
Maui Youth and Family Services
Na Pu'uwai Molokai Native
Hawaiian Health Care
Systems
P.A.R.E.N.T.S., Inc.
Parents and Children Together
PHOCUSED
Piha Wellness and Healing
Planned Parenthood of the
Great Northwest, Hawaii
Alaska, Kentucky, Indiana
Residential Youth Services
& Empowerment (RYSE)
Salvation Army Family
Intervention Services
Sex Abuse Treatment Center
Susannah Wesley Community
Center
The Catalyst Group

February 2, 2025

To: Senator Joy San Buenaventura, Chair
And members of the Committee on Health and Human
Services

TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF SB 950 RELATING TO TRAUMA- INFORMED CARE

Hawaii Youth Services Network (HYSN), a statewide coalition of youth-serving organizations, supports SB 950 Relating to Trauma-Informed Care

I serve as a member of the Hawaii Trauma-Informed Care Task Force. Over the past 3 years, the task force has developed a plan and strategies that will incorporate trauma-informed approaches to services provided to children, youth, and families.

This bill will enable the Department of Human Services to conduct a trauma-informed care organizational assessment and develop a training curriculum for Child Welfare Services. This may help the Department to address its critical shortage of staff (37% of of Child Welfare Services positions are currently vacant). It will improve quality of services provided to families and children.

Thank you for this opportunity to testify.

Sincerely,

Judith F. Clark, MPH
Executive Director



SB950 Trauma Informed Care Training

COMMITTEE ON HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES

Senator Joy A. San Buenaventura, Chair

Senator Henry J.C. Aquino, Vice Chair

Monday, Feb 10, 2025: 1:20: Room 225 Videoconference

Hawaii Substance Abuse Coalition Supports SB950:

ALOHA CHAIR, VICE CHAIR, AND DISTINGUISHED COMMITTEE MEMBERS. My name is Alan Johnson. I am the current chair of the Hawaii Substance Abuse Coalition (HSAC), a statewide organization for substance use disorder and co-occurring mental health disorder treatment and prevention agencies and recovery-oriented services.

Trauma-informed care (TIC) training is crucial in Hawai‘i due to the state’s unique cultural diversity, historical trauma, and high rates of adverse childhood experiences (ACEs). Here are some key reasons why TIC training is essential in Hawai‘i:

1. High Rates of Trauma and ACEs

- Hawai‘i has a significant prevalence of ACEs, including domestic violence, substance abuse, and family separation.
- Research shows that ACEs increase the risk of long-term health issues, including mental health disorders, substance abuse, and chronic diseases.

2. Historical and Generational Trauma

- Native Hawaiians and Pacific Islanders (NHPI) have experienced historical trauma due to colonization, land dispossession, and cultural suppression.
- Many communities face disparities in health, education, and socioeconomic status, increasing vulnerability to trauma-related issues.

3. Cultural Sensitivity and Indigenous Healing Practices

- Trauma-informed care in Hawai‘i should integrate local cultural values, including mālama (care), kuleana (responsibility), and aloha (compassion).
- Incorporating traditional healing practices, such as ho‘oponopono (conflict resolution) and lā‘au lapa‘au (herbal medicine), can enhance TIC effectiveness.

4. Impact on Healthcare, Education, and Social Services

- Healthcare providers need TIC training to support patients with trauma histories effectively.

- Educators can benefit from TIC to create safe learning environments and address student behavioral challenges.
- Social service agencies can use TIC to improve support for foster youth, domestic violence survivors, and justice-involved individuals.

5. Workforce Readiness and Community Resilience

- Training professionals in TIC can improve service delivery and reduce burnout among frontline workers.
- Strengthening trauma-informed systems can promote resilience and healing across communities.

Call to Action

Expanding trauma-informed care training in Hawai‘i is essential for creating compassionate, culturally responsive, and effective support systems. Investing in TIC can lead to better outcomes in health, education, and social well-being, ultimately fostering a stronger, more resilient Hawai‘i.

We appreciate the opportunity to provide testimony and are available for further questions.



**Testimony to the Senate Committee on Health and Human Services
Monday, February 10, 2025; 1:20 p.m.
State Capitol, Conference Room 225
Via Videoconference**

RE: SENATE BILL NO. 0950, RELATING TO TRAUMA-INFORMED CARE.

Chair San Buenaventura, Vice Chair Aquino, and Members of the Committee:

The Hawaii Primary Care Association (HPCA) is a 501(c)(3) organization established to advocate for, expand access to, and sustain high quality care through the statewide network of Community Health Centers throughout the State of Hawaii. The HPCA **SUPPORTS** Senate Bill No. 0950, RELATING TO TRAUMA-INFORMED CARE.

By way of background, the HPCA represents Hawaii's Federally Qualified Health Centers (FQHCs). FQHCs provide desperately needed medical services at the frontlines to over 150,000 patients each year who live in rural and underserved communities. Long considered champions for creating a more sustainable, integrated, and wellness-oriented system of health, FQHCs provide a more efficient, more effective and more comprehensive system of healthcare.

This measure, as received by your Committee, would direct the Office of Wellness and Resilience to collaborate with the Department of Human Services (DHS) to either directly or by contract design, administer, and implement a program for trauma-informed organizational assessments and a training curriculum for DHS Child Welfare Services Branch staff. To facilitate this, the bill also appropriates \$425,000 in general funds for fiscal year 2025-2026, and the same amount for fiscal year 2026-2027.

We note that this measure is substantively the same as a measure that heard and approved by this Committee on February 5, 2025 -- Senate Bill No. 1398.

Testimony on Senate Bill No. 0950

Monday, February 10, 2025; 1:20 p.m.

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The experience of trauma has widespread impacts on the lives of our citizenry. This often leads to or exacerbates mental illness, substance use and physical health conditions. Because of this, in a truly integrated whole health system of health care, effectively treating behavioral and physical health conditions must involve the impact of trauma.

Unfortunately, despite the best efforts of policymakers, health care providers, and government workers, the very services and systems designed to help people become healthy can be re-traumatizing. This bill seeks to improve the quality of outcomes for persons impacted by trauma by providing training to front-line public servants to better respond to citizens in need.

We respectfully urge your favorable consideration of this bill.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify. Should you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact Public Affairs and Policy Director Erik K. Abe at 536-8442, or eabe@hawaiiipca.net.

February 6, 2025

To: Chair San Buenaventura, and members of the Committee on Health and Human Services

From: Laurie Arial Tochiki, Co-Chair Mālama 'Ohana Working Group

Re: Testimony in support of SB 950

I strongly support SB 950 Relating to Trauma-Informed Care which provides funding to assess and train Child Welfare Services to address the trauma experienced by families, children, and youth, and also the trauma experienced by CWS staff. It appears that SB 950 and SB 1398 with its companion bill HB 1079 are very similar, and should be consolidated.

This work aligns with the purpose and expertise of the Office of Wellness and Resilience and provides a mandate and an opportunity to provide the training and assessment needed in one of the most challenging administrations in the state of Hawai'i. This work will be instrumental in developing the kind of child welfare system that our state wants and needs.

In 2023 the Mālama 'Ohana Working Group was established to develop recommendations to establish a child welfare system that is trauma-informed, sustains a community-based partnership, and responds to the needs of children and families in the system and the community. I serve as Co-Chair of the working group. The working group has completed its work and a full copy of the report can be found at www.malamaohana.net, however the working group is still subject to sunshine law until adjournment sine die. To be clear, the working group will not be making further decisions now that the report has been filed. The working group may meet during the session to provide information to the public about its report but will not make further decisions. Therefore, it is not allowed under sunshine law that more than two of us meet to discuss the report, or next steps. Therefore, I am testifying as a concerned citizen and speaking for the content of the report that was approved by the working group.

Our first task as the Mālama 'Ohana Working Group was to establish an approach to our work by cultivating and modeling the kind of listening and concern that we needed for our working group and modeling the type of child welfare system we hope for. From there, we began with the intense work of interviewing individuals, conducting conversations, and holding group discussions in Permitted Interaction Groups, which helped shape our initial understanding. We then conducted eleven community listening sessions throughout the state, gathering stories and ideas from each community we visited.

The report highlights the deep trauma experienced by children and families involved in the child welfare system—both from the circumstances that led to their involvement and from interactions with CWS itself. Key insights include:

- Families frequently experience secondary trauma from child welfare involvement, including removal of children, adversarial legal processes, and punitive rather than supportive interventions.
- Many caseworkers and child welfare professionals lack training in trauma-informed care, leading to interactions that can feel dehumanizing, coercive, or retraumatizing for families.
- Children in the system are often not provided with mental health support or healing services, leaving them with unaddressed trauma that can impact them long-term.
- Historical trauma, particularly in Native Hawaiian and Pacific Islander communities, contributes to mistrust of the system, and the lack of trauma-informed approaches exacerbates this harm.

The Mālama 'Ohana Working Group found that trauma-informed care must be the foundation of all interactions, policies, and practices in the child welfare system to prevent further harm and promote healing.

The report provides specific recommendations to integrate trauma-informed care into child welfare services, including:

1. Establish Trauma-Informed Training for Child Welfare Workers

- All CWS caseworkers, family court personnel, and service providers should receive mandatory trauma-informed care training.
- Training should include:
 - Understanding how trauma impacts child development and family dynamics.
 - Recognizing signs of trauma and appropriate responses.
 - Learning how to engage with families in a way that builds trust rather than fear.
 - Addressing historical trauma and cultural competency to better serve Native Hawaiian and Pacific Islander families.

2. Transform CWS Practices to Minimize Trauma

- Redesign family interactions to be less adversarial and more supportive.
- Ensure that child removals, when necessary, are handled in a way that minimizes trauma for both children and parents.
- Encourage family preservation whenever safe and possible, using trauma-informed approaches rather than punitive measures.

3. Provide Trauma-Informed Mental Health Support for Children and Families

- Expand access to therapy, counseling, and culturally rooted healing practices for children and parents affected by trauma.

- Ensure that all children in foster care receive trauma screenings and appropriate mental health care.
- Provide trauma-informed parenting education to support family reunification and prevent re-entry into the system.

4. Implement Trauma-Informed Organizational Change

- Require state agencies to adopt trauma-informed policies and protocols.
- Create a culture where frontline workers feel supported and trained to handle trauma effectively.
- Develop an oversight system to ensure that trauma-informed principles are upheld across all child welfare services.

The Mālama 'Ohana Working Group makes it clear that without trauma-informed care, the child welfare system will continue to cause harm instead of healing. The report urges system-wide changes to integrate trauma-informed principles, ensuring that all interactions with children and families promote trust, dignity, and resilience.

We are grateful for your support of the families and children in the child welfare system, and your efforts to find ways to improve the system.



February 10, 2025

Members of the Senate Committee on Health and Human Services:

Chair Joy A. San Buenaventura
Vice Chair Henry J.C. Aquino
Sen. Troy N. Hashimoto
Sen. Jarrett Keohokalole
Sen. Kurt Fevella

Re: SB950 Relating to Trauma-Informed Care

Dear Chair San Buenaventura, Vice Chair Aquino, and Members of the Senate Committee on Health and Human Services:

The Hawai'i State Coalition Against Domestic Violence (HSCADV) addresses the social, political, and economic impacts of domestic violence on individuals, families, and communities. We are a statewide partnership of domestic violence programs and shelters.

On behalf of HSCADV and our 25 member programs statewide, I respectfully submit testimony in **strong support of SB950**, which would direct the Office of Wellness and Resilience, in collaboration with Child Welfare Services (CWS), to carry out a trauma-informed organizational assessment and training for CWS staff.

Act 86 (2023) established the Mālama 'Ohana Working Group within the Office of Wellness and Resilience to seek, design, and recommend transformative changes to the state's child welfare system. One of the recommendations submitted in the Mālama 'Ohana Working Group Report was the need to develop a trauma-informed child welfare system. SB950 proposes an important opportunity to address this recommendation.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on this important matter.

Sincerely,
Angelina Mercado, Executive Director

Opportunity for Youth Action Hawai'i

February 10, 2025

Senate Committee on Health and Human Services
Hearing Time: 1:20PM
Location: State Capitol Conference Room 225
Re: SB950, Relating to Trauma-Informed Care

Aloha e Chair San Buenaventura, Vice Chair Aquinto, and Members of the Committee:

On behalf of the Opportunity for Youth Action Hawai'i hui, we are writing in **strong support of SB950, relating to trauma-informed care**. This bill requires the Office of Wellness and Resilience to design, implement, and administer trauma-informed organizational assessments and a training curriculum for Child Welfare Services to support the development of a trauma-informed child welfare system in the State. It allows the office to contract with public and private entities to provide necessary services. This bill also appropriates funds.

Too often, families facing hardship are funneled into the child welfare system due to a lack of preventative resources and early intervention. This bill would help bridge that gap by providing a training curriculum related to trauma-informed care. It helps ensure that families have access to a comprehensive network of services, including mental health support, substance abuse treatment, parenting education, and economic assistance. The appropriation of funds for this initiative is an investment in the health and stability of our communities, ultimately reducing long-term costs associated with foster care placements and other child welfare interventions.

Opportunity for Youth Action Hawai'i is a collaboration of organizations and individuals committed to reducing the harmful effects of a punitive incarceration system for youth; promoting equity in the justice system; and improving and increasing resources to address adolescent and young adult mental health needs. We seek to improve the continuity of programs and services for youth and young adults transitioning from minor to adult status; eliminate youth homelessness and housing market discrimination against young adults; and promote and fund more holistic and culturally informed approaches among public/private agencies serving youth.

Please support SB950.

TO: Senate, Committee on Health and Human Services
Senator Joy A. San Buenaventura, Chair
Senator Henry J.C. Aquino, Vice Chair

LATE

HEARING: Monday, February 10, 2025
1:20 PM
Conference Room 225

FROM: Sharla-Ann Houlding, LSW

RE: In SUPPORT of SB950 – Relating to Trauma-Informed Care

My name is Sharla-Ann Houlding, and I am submitting testimony in strong support of SB950 and its intent to strengthen Hawai'i's child welfare system by ensuring that Department of Human Services-Child Welfare Services (DHS-CWS) staff receive comprehensive training in trauma-informed care, and appropriate funds for the development of this curriculum.

I am currently the HI H.O.P.E.S. Initiative Supervisor, an Advisor for the HI H.O.P.E.S. Youth Leadership Board in West Hawai'i. I have been working in the field with youth and families involved in the foster care system for the last 16 years in multiple roles including a case manager for youth in (and transitioning out of) foster care, a resource caregiver (a.k.a., "foster parent"), an educator and advocate, and also through my work as a social worker for a Guardian ad Litem (GAL). Throughout my time served in these various roles, I have seen firsthand the multitude of challenges and tragedies that occur when youth and families, who are already extremely traumatized and vulnerable, are being case managed by social workers who lack the basic essential components of trauma-informed care.

Children and families involved in the child welfare system experience profound trauma prior to, and often throughout, their involvement with the system. The current system these youth and families are forced to navigate is not designed to recognize and respond adequately to individuals with these experiences, which puts them at risk for further harm. SB950 addresses this issue by directing the Office of Wellness and Resilience to design, implement, and administer trauma-informed organizational assessments and a training curriculum specifically designed for the Child Welfare Services Branch of the State of Hawai'i's Department of Human Services.

Trauma-informed care (TIC) is an approach to social work that recognizes the impact of trauma on the individuals served and actively takes steps to prevent re-traumatization and further trauma from occurring and also promotes healing. According to the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA), TIC operates on six guiding principles:

1. Safety
2. Trustworthiness and transparency
3. Peer support
4. Collaboration and mutuality
5. Empowerment, voice, and choice, and
6. Cultural, historical, and gender issues

SB950 implements several key recommendations from the Mālama 'Ohana Working Group by ensuring CWS staff receive comprehensive trauma-informed training, provides tools to assess worker well-being and strategies to address worker burnout, reviews and improves current policies and practice to help youth and families involved in the system heal, and also utilizes expert

consultation to create a framework and guide to help them increase their knowledge about TIC principles and best practices. The bill also asks to provide funding for evidence-based assessment tools and ongoing technical assistance, helping staff better understand and mitigate the effects of trauma, both for the children they serve and for themselves as professionals exposed to vicarious (or secondary) trauma.

Specifically, this bill ensures that all child welfare services staff will receive:

- **An evidence-based assessment tool** to evaluate and improve policies and procedures to better serve children and families who have experienced trauma
- **An assessment tool** to measure how CWS currently assesses worker well-being, including the effects of vicarious trauma, secondary traumatic stress, and burnout
- **A training curriculum** for the establishment of a cohort of trained mentors to provide guidance
- **A branch-wide trauma-informed care curriculum** accompanied by ongoing technical assistance
- **Specialized trauma-informed supervisor training and technical assistance** to ensure sustainable implementation of the curriculum
- **A child welfare service expert** to consult on the implementation of the assessments' findings

Additionally, SB950 asks to provide necessary funding for each of the next two fiscal years (i.e., 2025-2026 and 2026-2027) to support this initiative, including potential opportunities to contract with public or private entities to implement the training and assessment tools.

The passage of SB950 would lead to an investment in a trauma-informed system that will not only improve the outcomes for children and families impacted by the CWS system, but it would also provide the much-needed support for CWS social workers in hopes that it could lead to staff retention and the reduction of secondary trauma, stress, and burnout. This piece of legislation is one concrete step that is vital to help transform our Child Welfare system into one that could truly promote healing and resilience for everyone involved. To promote healing and resilience, trauma-informed care must be embedded into every aspect of child welfare services, and this bill provides a structured framework to make that a reality.

I respectfully urge the Committee to pass SB950 to ensure that our Child Welfare system is equipped with the proper tools and resources to serve Hawai'i's most vulnerable children and families in a trauma-informed manner and with the compassion, care, aloha, and understanding they deserve.

Mahalo nui loa for your time, consideration, and for the opportunity to testify.

With my deepest gratitude and aloha,
Sharla-Ann Houlding, LSW
EPIC 'Ohana
HI H.O.P.E.S. Initiative

To: Chair, Vice Chair, and Members of the Committee

From: Euoan Raquel, Social Work Graduate Student and Adolescent School-Based Substance Use Counselor

Monday, February 10, 2025
1:20 PM
Conference Room 225 & Videoconference
State Capitol
415 South Beretania Street

Subject: Testimony in Support of SB950 – Relating to Trauma-Informed Care

Aloha Chair Senator Joy A. San Buenaventura, Vice Chair Senator Henry J.C. Aquino, and Members of the Committee,

I'm writing to you to express my support for SB950, which, from my understanding, aims to appropriate funds to the Office of Wellness and Resilience for the development of a trauma-informed child welfare system in Hawaii. As a social work graduate student and an adolescent school-based substance use counselor, I have seen firsthand the importance of trauma-informed practices in supporting our vulnerable youth and families.

Trauma-informed care is a critical component when addressing the complex needs of children and adolescents involved in child welfare services. Many adolescents I work with have experienced significant trauma, including adverse childhood experiences, which often contribute to their substance use habits and behavioral struggles. Without trauma-informed systems, these populations are at risk of being triggered and retraumatized by the very system meant to serve and support them. I believe that SB950's focus on applying evidence-based practices will create a positive impact and ensure that child welfare system services are better equipped to address and recognize trauma within our youth population.

Overall I support SB950, I believe it will be a progressive step toward creating a more compassionate, effective, and sustainable system in Hawaii within Child Welfare Services. By applying trauma-informed care practices, we can work toward building resilience from trauma among one of our most vulnerable populations in the State of Hawaii."

Mahalo,
Euoan Raquel
Social Work Graduate Student, Adolescent School-Based Substance Use Counselor

February 6, 2025

To: Senator San Buenaventura, Chair, and Senator Aquino, Vice Chair
Senate Committee on Health & Human Services

From: Karen Worthington, Private Citizen

Re: **SB 950: Relating to Trauma-Informed Care**
Hawai'i State Capitol, Room 225 and Videoconference, February 10, 2025, 1:20pm

Position: SUPPORT

Dear Senator San Buenaventura, Senator Aquino, and Committee Members:

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony in support of SB 950, which establishes trauma-informed organizational assessments and training curricula for the child welfare services branch within the Department of Human Services (DHS). This legislation represents a critical step toward creating a more responsive and effective child welfare system—one that is better able to support families impacted by trauma as well as staff who may have their own trauma histories and also experience secondary trauma through their work.

My name is Karen Worthington, and I am a children's law and policy attorney with a consulting business on Maui, Karen Worthington Consulting. I have worked as a lawyer in and around state systems affecting children and families throughout my 30-year career. I am certified as a Child Welfare Law Specialist by the National Association of Counsel for Children. I have worked extensively with Hawai'i state departments and nonprofit organizations that support children and families who exist at the margins of our society.

Please pass SB 950. This legislation will strengthen our child welfare system in several important ways:

- It responds to the documented experiences of children and families who have found the current system challenging to navigate, often experiencing it as adversarial, confusing, and traumatic, as detailed in the Mālama 'Ōhana Working Group Report.
- It creates a framework for implementing evidence-based practices that will help ensure CWS interventions are respectful, supportive, and minimize rather than compound trauma for both families and workers.
- It addresses the critical issue of secondary trauma and burnout among child welfare workers through trauma-informed supervision training, which will lead to better stability and outcomes for both staff and the families they serve.
- It aligns with best practices in child welfare by ensuring that trauma-informed care becomes deeply embedded in the culture and practice of Child Welfare Services.

The conditions that bring families into contact with the child welfare system often involve trauma, and our system's response must be grounded in an understanding of trauma's impact. By implementing comprehensive trauma-informed organizational assessments and training, we can create a system that better supports both the families we serve and the dedicated professionals who work with them.

Karen Worthington, Kula, HI 96790

The Office of Wellness and Resilience is uniquely situated to support CWS in integrating trauma-informed care practices. SB 950 directly aligns with the mission of the OWR by addressing the critical barriers to well-being for both staff and the children and families served by CWS.

This change is recommended by the Mālama'Ohana Working Group and aligns with the growing body of evidence showing that trauma-informed systems produce better outcomes for children and families. If you would like additional information related to my testimony, please do not hesitate to contact me at karen@karenworthington.com.

Best regards,

A handwritten signature in dark ink that reads "Karen Worthington". The script is cursive and fluid, with the first name "Karen" and last name "Worthington" clearly legible.

Karen Worthington

SB-950

Submitted on: 2/7/2025 10:20:44 PM

Testimony for HHS on 2/10/2025 1:20:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Deanna Espinas	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Please support this bill. Thank you.

SB-950

Submitted on: 2/8/2025 1:12:36 PM

Testimony for HHS on 2/10/2025 1:20:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Dara Carlin, M.A.	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments: Standing in Support

LATE

SB-950

Submitted on: 2/9/2025 1:18:57 PM

Testimony for HHS on 2/10/2025 1:20:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Veronica Moore	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

To: Senator Joy San Buenaventura, Chair

Senator Henry Aquino, Vice Chair

Senate Committee on Health and Human Services

Senate Committee on Ways and Means

From: Veronica Moore, Individual Citizen

Date: February 9, 2025

RE: Upcoming Hearing for SB950

Measure Title: RELATING TO TRAUMA-INFORMED CARE.

Report Title: OWR; CWS; DHS; Trauma-Informed Care; Trauma-Informed Care;
Training Curriculum; Organizational Assessment;
Appropriations (\$)

To All Concerned,

My name is Veronica Moore and I support Senate Bill 950 as it aims to “support the development of a trauma-informed child welfare system in the State.” Thank you for introducing this bill, and I appreciate the opportunity to present testimony regarding it.

Sincerely,

Veronica M. Moore

LATE

Chair San Buenaventura & Vice Chair Aquino
Senate Committee on Health and Human Services
Hawai'i State Capitol
415 South Beretania Street
Honolulu, HI 96813

Bill: SB950
Subject: Testimony in support of SB950 Relating to Trauma-Informed Care
Scheduled a public hearing on 02-10-25 at 1:20 PM
Conference Room 225 and Videoconference

Aloha Chair San Buenaventura, Vice Chair Aquino, and Members of the HHS Committee,

My name is Kayla and I am currently a graduate student at UH Manoa studying social work. I am writing to express my support for SB950, which requires the Office of Wellness and Resilience (OWR) to design, implement, and administer trauma-informed organizational assessments and training curriculum for Child Welfare Services (CWS) to support the development of a trauma-informed child welfare system in Hawai'i. This bill allows the office to contract with public and private entities to provide necessary services and appropriates funds.

Children involved in the child welfare system have often endured significant trauma ranging from neglect, physical and sexual abuse, and systemic adversity. A trauma-informed approach attempts to prevent these children from facing additional harm within the system meant to protect and support them.

In my role as a Youth Engagement Coordinator for a human service agency that worked with foster youth in Vermont, I have seen firsthand the devastating impact that traumatic experiences can have on a child's mental and emotional health. By working to address underlying trauma, mental health concerns, and social inequality, I believe that we can reduce the number of people experiencing systemic disadvantages and instead create a society that prioritizes equitable access to resources and opportunities.

Establishing a trauma-informed assessment and training curriculum will attempt to ensure that CWS staff, foster families, and service providers would be trained with the knowledge and tools necessary to mitigate the impact of additional trauma. Furthermore, implementing SB950 and allowing OWR to contract with public and private entities will provide necessary services, ensures that best practices are integrated into Hawai'i's child welfare policies and operations.

For these reasons, I respectfully encourage the Committee to pass SB950 and support the transformation and progression of Hawai'i's child welfare system so that it can attempt to understand and effectively respond to the needs of children and families affected by trauma.

Mahalo for your careful consideration.

Respectfully,

Kayla Altobelli-Libercent
UH Manoa MSW Student
kaal@hawaii.edu

LATE

Testimony in support of:

SB950: RELATING TO TRAUMA-INFORMED CARE.

Submitted by:
Lei Goleta-Cruz
Leiahnam@hawaii.edu
2/10/2025

Dear members of the Senate committee on Health & Human Services and Committee on Ways and Means:

My name is Lei Goleta-Cruz,

I am a Graduate Student at the University of Hawai'i at Mānoa, in the Thompson School of Social Work & Public Health. I will be graduating this Spring 2025, in hopes to seek out employment opportunities here in Hawai'i, specifically working with children who have experienced trauma. Having personally navigated my own experiences with trauma since early-childhood, I am deeply passionate about not only advocating for these children but also providing support as someone who may have a unique understanding of their challenges and experiences.

I am writing to express **strong support** for Senate Bill 950, which proposes the Office of Wellness and Resilience to design, implement, and administer trauma-informed organizational assessments and establish a comprehensive training curriculum for Child Welfare Services (CWS) staff in Hawai'i.

As a former CWS worker, specifically working as a SSA IV in the Critical Response Team Unit, I have seen first hand the need for training and implementation on trauma-informed care and practices. Having been responsible for responding to situations that most times involved very traumatic incidents, I often felt unprepared for certain situations. Many times, I have also observed instances where CWS workers and staff have not consistently adhered to ethical standards in performing their duties, resulting in actions that do not always serve the best interests of the children, families, and the system as a whole.

CWS plays a crucial role in safeguarding our most vulnerable children, including those who have experienced abuse, neglect, and various forms of trauma. However, it is essential that those who work with these children have the necessary training, tools, and support to address the deep emotional and psychological impacts of trauma in a sensitive and effective manner. Trauma-informed care emphasizes understanding, recognizing, and responding to the effects of all types of trauma, including childhood trauma, in a way that fosters healing and resilience.

1. Trauma-Informed Assessments:

SB 950's proposal for conducting trauma-informed organizational assessments would allow the State to evaluate existing systems and practices within the current CWS system through a trauma-sensitive lens. This assessment would identify gaps, areas for improvement, and opportunities to enhance the agency's ability to support children and families affected by trauma. In turn, this would lead to a more effective and compassionate system, ultimately improving outcomes for children who need our help the most.

2. Training Curriculum:

SB 950 proposes a training curriculum for CWS staff that is focused on trauma-informed care. This curriculum will ensure that those working in the field of child welfare understand the complexities of trauma and its far-reaching effects. By embedding trauma-informed principles into the day-to-day work of social workers, case managers, and other staff members, this will not only provide better support to children but also reduce secondary trauma and burnout for service providers, creating a healthier work environment for all involved.

3. Long-Term Benefits:

By prioritizing trauma-informed approaches, SB 950 will help create a more responsive, compassionate, and efficient child welfare system here in Hawai'i. Children who experience trauma often face lifelong challenges, and the services we provide can either enhance or hinder their recovery. This bill provides the tools necessary to ensure that CWS is equipped to offer the best possible support for both the children they serve and the professionals who care for them.

The integration of trauma-informed practices within CWS is crucial and necessary. By passing SB 950, Hawai'i can lead the way in providing a model of care that supports healing for children who have faced unimaginable hardships. With Hawai'i recently becoming a trauma-informed state, this bill 100% supports our goal to improve the state of Hawai'i's resilience and wellness by adopting trauma-informed care practices.

I respectfully urge the committee to pass SB 950, which represents a critical step toward improving the well-being of our state's most vulnerable children and families. Thank you for your attention to this very important matter, and for your ongoing commitment to the health, safety, and future of Hawai'i's children.

Mahalo nui loa,
Lei Goleta-Cruz